Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore

General Management Plan/Wilderness Study

Summary of Public Comments

May 22, 2006

Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore has begun developing a new General Management Plan (GMP) and Wilderness Study. This plan will provide a vision for management and protection of the park's resources for the next 20 years. The plan will also re-examine the areas recommended for wilderness management. As a part of this process, information has been collected from the general public and interested parties regarding future management concerns. In January 2006, newsletters were distributed to individuals and organizations interested in the Lakeshore and its resources. This was followed by public open houses held at three locations in Michigan (Empire, Traverse City, and Benzonia).

As a result, we heard from hundreds of people – in person and by conventional and electronic mail. These comments will set the stage for the major topics the General Management Plan/Wilderness Study planning effort will help address. Several specific ideas and concerns were expressed about the Lakeshore and its future. Public input will continue to be invaluable in helping develop a plan that will make a lasting difference in the long-term management of Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore.

This document presents a summary of the comments received regarding the scoping phase in development of the General Management Plan/Wilderness Study.

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SUMMARY OF COMMENTS RECEIVED

In January 2006, 2,508 newsletters were mailed to announce the beginning of the General Management Plan and Wilderness Study process. The newsletter ("Newsletter #1) described the park and its resources and provided information on the draft purpose and significance of this unique national park unit. It also provided information regarding the Wilderness Study that will be incorporated into the General Management Plan and the background of wilderness at the Lakeshore. In addition, a press release was prepared and distributed on February 7, 2006 to roughly 40 media contacts.

In addition, public open houses were held during February and March 2006. Meetings were held in Empire with 75 in attendance and Traverse City with 55 in attendance on February 14th and 15th, respectively. The public meeting in Benzonia which was scheduled to take place February 16th was rescheduled due to winter weather conditions. It occurred on March 2nd and was attended by 20 people. In each of these formats, the public was invited to comment on the draft purpose and significance statements provided in the newsletter and to provide the team with issues or concerns that should be considered in the General Management Plan/Wilderness Study.

Through distribution of the newsletter and feedback given on the National Park Service planning website, by electronic mail, and at the public meetings, a variety of concerns and suggestions were obtained. A total of 337 documents were received from individuals and organizations. The majority (282 documents, or 84 percent) of the documents were submitted to the park via the newsletter comment form or by letter. Interested parties also provided 24 documents (7 percent) to the NPS planning website and 15 (4 percent) by electronic mail. In addition, 16 people (5 percent) voiced their concerns and opinions at the public open houses using a court recorder. Many of the documents submitted by the public contained more than one comment or suggestion regarding the General Management Plan/Wilderness Study planning effort. The comments received were reflective of a public that is passionate about the future of the resources, its uses, and management. Many of those that commented were able to provide detailed recommendations on how areas in the park should be managed, what resources they thought were of most importance for protection or preservation, and what they would like to see for the future of the Lakeshore. A detailed tabular summary of the comments received is included as the final pages of this document.

The topics addressed by the public in these comments have been organized into major topics that broadly describe the nature of the comments. These topics were then sorted into five categories which reflect to a large degree the five questions asked of the public in the newsletter. These questions are listed in Appendix A.

The following are the major topics into which the public comments were consolidated:

- What the public values about the park;
- Issue-specific statements regarding the current or future management of the park that should be addressed by the plan. These concerns were further grouped by the following topics:
 - Access
 - Conservation and preservation of resources

- Development
- Management of new areas and suggested land acquisitions
- Operations and management
- Visitor use
- Wilderness
- Comments regarding the draft purpose and significance statements;
- Comments regarding wilderness within the Lakeshore;
- Suggestions by the public on management options that could be considered in the development of management zones or alternatives for the GMP/Wilderness Study;
- Other comments regarding the planning process and Lakeshore management
 - Comments or suggestions on the GMP/Wilderness Study process, partnerships, and education
 - Comments that are beyond the scope of the GMP/Wilderness Study or more appropriate for another planning process; and
- Recommended "Frequently Asked Questions" and corresponding response topics.

A short synopsis of comments within each category is presented below, along with sample comments submitted by individuals and organizations.

WHAT THE PUBLIC VALUES ABOUT THE PARK

The majority of the commenters, particularly those that submitted comments via the comment form attached to the newsletter, expressed what they valued about the Lakeshore. The responses varied from those that appreciate the beauty and serenity offered at the Lakeshore and its natural resources such as the beaches and dunes. Others appreciate and value the historic structures and landscapes. Many commenters responded that they valued the accessibility to the park's resources and the ability to experience and enjoy a variety of recreational activities such as the dune climb, hiking on trails, biking, fishing, and hunting. Table 5 identifies the range of what commenters value about the Lakeshore, ranked by number of comments received. Below are some example comments:

"I value the park for its sandy beaches and dunes, for its quiet forests, and farm fields. I value the park for the many farm houses, as well as the remnant maritime and commercial buildings representative of Nineteenth century American life." SLBE-005

"The pristine beauty, the peacefulness, the beautiful trails, and the accessibility of all of the above." SLBE-016

"I like the availability of a large area of public land that I can hunt and fish without worry of trespassing on someone's private property." SLBE-025

"The dunes, lakes, hiking and ski trails. The whole unique ecosystem." SLBE-052

ISSUE-SPECIFIC STATEMENTS REGARDING THE CURRENT OR FUTURE MANAGEMENT OF THE LAKESHORE THAT SHOULD BE ADDRESSED BY THE PLAN

According to the questions asked in the January 2006 newsletter, 143 comments were received that identified concerns or issues of the public that it wishes to have considered during the GMP/Wilderness Study process. These concerns were grouped according to topics such as access, conservation and preservation of resources, development, management of new areas and suggested land acquisitions, operations and management of the Lakeshore, visitor use and experience, and wilderness.

Access

This section details the concerns and issues with access to the Lakeshore that were submitted by public; 55 comments were received regarding this issue. Those comments received that recommend areas in the Lakeshore where access should be either enhanced or decreased are addressed separately in a later section below, "Suggested Components of Alternatives".

Issues regarding access to the Lakeshore were raised by many commenters who expressed very passionate views and opinions. The comments ranged from being broad in terms of support or opposition of more access to those that had concerns regarding access to specific locations in the Lakeshore. Specific areas of the park mentioned included the beach, boat access, road access, and trails. Some commenters wanted increased beach access, while others wanted it to remain the same. One comment was made to reduce or remove access to the beach.

The comments also included those that had concerns regarding specific types of access to the park, such as for bicycles and snowmobiles. One commenter stated that bicycle access was an accessibility issue for physically handicapped. One commenter was concerned about the lack of safe boating access to Lake Michigan. Others said that they do not want boat access.

Many commenters in general expressed concern that the park remain accessible and that access not be limited.

"Maintain access to the areas, don't close any roads or trails." SLBE-031

"We would expect that the Lakeshore will always have areas that are readily accessible by auto... We do not want to exclude people or totally discourage accessibility. Rather, we want the GMP to promote and enhance non-motorized, non-intrusive uses, which we believe will improve the true quality of visitors' experience." SLBE-007

"As is presently available, limited access for vehicles and developed trails and camping should be maintained to ensure availability and enjoyment of it." SLBE-015

Others are concerned about an increase in road development and increased access to the Lakeshore.

"[Concerned] that more roads will be made, catering to those who don't want to drive everywhere." SLBE-036

"Increased access for cars and campers should not be made in the park proper." SLBE-100

Concerns about access for elderly and handicapped were raised by a number of commenters, particularly with regard to accessing the lake beaches.

"I would like to see people of all ages and disabilities able to experience all areas that are not wilderness (not man made). They should be able to go to both islands and visit the villages and learn and see about the history of the islands." SLBE-049

"Handicap access should not be for every area of the park. The cost and upkeep are too much for the comparatively small number of people involved." SLBE-001

Conservation and Preservation of Resources

During the scoping process, 25 comments were received regarding concerns or issues about conservation and preservation of Lakeshore resources. Resource issues focused on natural resource protection, historical resource preservation, and visitor use of the park and its effects. Natural resource related concerns included overuse of the area causing degradation and erosion of beaches, dunes, and trails. Management of farm fields and previously managed landscapes was raised as a concern. One commenter wanted old fields to remain as fields, not forest, while others wanted to see natural forest replace pine plantations. Concern was also expressed over the potential loss of historic resources within the park and that further protection was needed. However, one commenter did not want the park to be so restored because they want the park to look like it did 200 years ago. Water quality, septic pollution, and car exhaust were also issues of concerns.

The following are example comments of these concerns:

"We are concerned about overuse and degradation of some Lakeshore areas including the lower Platte River, the beaches at the Platte River outlet, and the Esch Road beach area." SLBE-007

"To watch areas of concern for erosion control along the Lake Michigan shoreline, possibly by planting shrubs, grasses, etc. that are indigenous to the area." SLBE-013

"I'm concerned about the historic barns and farms. I'm glad they're being renovated at least from the outside as they are a part of the history of the area." SLBE-330

Development

Comments received regarding concerns or issues with particular development (13) in the park included development of facilities either in a broad sense or in particular areas of the Lakeshore and commercial development. Concerns raised over the development of boat launches included the concern that it would lead to increased development in the future, more boat launches will lead to increased boating accidents, and boat launches will cause further environmental damage. One commenter was concerned with D.H. Campground becoming so developed, it looked like Platte River Campground. Two people commented that the park does not provide adequate facilities during peak times, such as adequate parking lots. Some commenters were concerned about NPS development at Crystal Ridge, while others were concerned about private development in the same area. A number of commenters were concerned about overdevelopment of the park in the future. One group raised the issue of inadequate facilities for the high visitation the park receives and how that leads to safety concerns. Example comments are listed below:

"My concerns are that the current existence of county roads in wilderness boundaries as well as potential plans for beach and boat launch development will be beneficial today but may open up a 'snowball effect' of development in the future as population and use of the area increases." SLBE-032

"A large launch facility or harbor of any kind attracts larger boats. The word spreads and the numbers of boats increases exponentially yearly. Along with more and larger boats comes more water accidents, damage to areas surrounding the development from carelessness, requests from boaters for more parking, more litter and solid waste to clean up, potential environmental damage from leaking or spilled fuels, a variety of law enforcement concerns, and a loss of the Platte River mouth's and Platte Bay's hallmark attraction; peace, quiet, and unobstructed sunsets enjoyed by the majority of visitors to this spot...I feel strongly a man made launch/harbor should not be built at the mouth or on Platte Bay. This last surviving undeveloped river mouth should be left undeveloped." SLBE-008

"I am concerned that with increased demand in the future, the NPS will be unable to resist the pressure to provide more formal parking which will ultimately destroy the character that exists now." SLBE-018

"Visitor use does 'tax park resources and infrastructure'. [Our group] is well aware that the vast majority of people will continue to visit in July and August. Since the NPS does not provide facilities to meet peak times, it seems reasonable that those facilities directly related to visitor enjoyment and safety, get another look. We all know that visitation will only increase. Some facilities in the park were inadequate when built. These need NPS attention. In particular we are referring to inadequate parking at Platte Point. Safe, offroad parking in parking lots is inadequate. This is a liability and safety issue that should be addressed." SLBE-010

Management of New Areas and Suggested Land Acquisitions

A few comments (7) were received regarding issues with management of potential new areas of the Lakeshore or acquisition of lands. Overall concerns regarding new areas and future land acquisitions included the concern that portions of the park could be sold or traded. Another commenter was concerned that land swaps could occur and was opposed to them, especially for large areas. Concern was expressed that not enough adjacent property has been acquired. A suggestion was made to the park to coordinate with the Grand Traverse Conservancy to acquire future parcels. Some commenters opposed any future land acquisitions.

"Any new developments in or near the park, or 'improvements' pose a threat to the current tranquility." SLBE-190

"Not enough acquisition of adjoining property to add to SBDNL and/or acquisition of conservation easements to protect viewsheds, agriculture resources and habitat adjoining existing SBDNL property." SLBE-206

Operations and Management

Some commenters were concerned about management of the Lakeshore, the lack of facilities, and enforcement of regulations within the Lakeshore. A total of 24 comments were received regarding this issue. Specific aspects of maintenance and facilities that were of concern include

trash, boat use, campfires, trail maintenance, litter and human waste on North Manitou, and lack of fees being collected in some areas of the park (County Road 651), while required elsewhere.

A number of commenters raised concerns about law enforcement and the need for more rangers in the park, including in the campgrounds. Enforcement of dog regulations was specifically mentioned several times. One comment on overall management of the park was concerned with managing Manitou Passage as part of the entire park.

"On North Manitou Island the last few visits I noticed that there was more litter and not proper waste (human) care being taken away from the village. I never see a ranger on any of my hikes as I did in years past." SLBE-049

Visitor Use

In the 19 comments received regarding visitor use in the Lakeshore, concerns included effects of motorized use on visitor experience and overuse of the park. Commenters suggested carrying capacities be established for certain activities and for use of the Lakeshore in general.

Concern was raised about the large numbers of kayakers and canoeists using waterways:

"We enjoy canoeing down the beautiful Platte River to Lake Michigan...if the heavy people use needs to be controlled, then we would support that if it's done in an equitable manner." SLBE-195

Some commenters felt it important to reduce vehicle use in the park for improved visitor experience.

"We also see some motor vehicle traffic on back roads (e.g., Peterson Road, Aral Road, the portion of West Otter Creek Trail open to motor vehicles) that to us are unnecessary, intrusive, and a detriment to the enjoyment of the Park. Motor vehicles are not really necessary to gain access to the areas serviced by many of those seasonal roads; the distances from the highway are not that great or the terrain so difficult that motor vehicles are truly required." SLBE-007

With regard to trails, one commenter felt they were poorly marked in forested areas. Another felt that the Alligator Hill area was underutilized for trails. Some commenters felt that the park was overused in certain areas and at certain times of the year. The summer was mentioned as being overcrowded, while Pierce Stocking Scenic Drive and highly developed areas were described as being overused.

"Too many people using the park in the summer months." SLBE-160

Also, some commenters expressed concerns about how the park will accommodate local visitors in the future, which comprise a noticeable number of overall visitors, as they are aging and will be less desirous of hiking and camping activities.

COMMENTS ON DRAFT PURPOSE AND SIGNIFICANCE STATEMENTS

Most of respondents had expressed an opinion about the draft purpose and significance statements presented in Newsletter #1. Comments were received that either agreed or disagreed with the draft purpose and significance statements as provided in the newsletter. Many people (73) in general supported the statements saying they were comprehensive and well articulated. Some commenters brought up specific concerns with the statements, suggested specific language for the statements, or particular resources that should be included in the statements.

Purpose Statement

The majority of commenters supported the purpose statement. A number of commenters recognized the difficulty in balancing preservation of resources with recreational use of the Lakeshore. Some commenters went on further to express opinions about the use of "recreation," as some wanted recreation to be less emphasized, while others thought it should be given more emphasis.

More than one commenter opposed the statements because they were not the exact wording used in the law that established the park and they question the NPS authority to make such changes. One commenter questioned the phrase "recreational landscape" asking for more clarification. Another thought the phrase "protect them from developments and uses that would destroy the scenic beauty and..." also needed further clarification. A few commenters stated the need for defining "consistent with maximum protection" in the purpose statement and others interpreted "maximum protection" to mean no accessibility. Others wrote in with concern over the phrase "and then to" in the purpose statement as they felt it implied a hierarchy among resources which would be inconsistent with the shared goals of the two statements.

Specific comments on purpose statement include:

"We find this rewording objectionable as it differs from the original wording in the law creating Sleeping Bear. That wording in the law is the wording that established the 'purpose' of the Lakeshore and nothing has changed that. The legislative history of the Congress backs up the intentions of the Congress. Only they can change this purpose and intent and that has not happened. There are no other laws or policies that have changed this purpose and intent. We suggest in newsletter #2 that you make this clear and are therefore restating the 'purpose'. We urge you to do so by restating the 'purpose and intent' of the Congress with the exact words quoted from the legislation-Public Law 91-479." SLBE-010

"We agree with the current drafts! However, different people will define each element broader/narrower than intended. Hopefully you can benchmark the ideal versus the marginal and unacceptable." SLBE-056

"I agree with the draft purpose and significance statements. I especially like the stated concept of allowing the continuation of the ecological processes that have shaped the natural communities. This would encourage the periodic cutting of existing fields after nesting season to prevent the takeover by woody plants." SLBE-229

"I wish the purposes would downplay the need for 'recreational opportunities." SLBE-080 "I would like to see statements like, manage, the outstanding natural resources. Preserve is a misleading statement! You can not preserve natural resources!" SLBE-083

"I would change the second Purpose statement to show a greater balance between recreation and protection. Protection should be 'optimum', not 'maximum'." SLBE-143

"Need to define what 'consistent with maximum protection' means in purpose statement. Seems to be a higher standard than unimpaired but legislative history suggests something else." SLBE-184

Significance Statements

The majority of commenters supported the significance statements. Comments on significance statements were similar to those discussed above for purpose in that the statement did not exactly match the language of the law establishing the park and that recreation be emphasized more or less. Some commenters suggested the addition of more resources to the statements such as fish, geology, wildlife corridors, and water quality. Others thought that the cultural and historical aspects of the Lakeshore should be given more emphasis. Specific comments on significance statements include:

"We find that the NPS has gone beyond the intended 'significance' as stated in the Public Law. You have gone 'wild' with exaggeration by the use of words such as:

- 'global importance';
- 'unparalleled range of recreational, educational and inspirational opportunities';
- 'a size and quality unique on the Great Lakes and rare elsewhere in the United States'
- 'native plant and animal communities are of a scale and quality rare on the Great Lakes shoreline.'" SLBE-010

"It is imperative that the cultural history of the Lakeshore gets recognized, interpreted, and cared for along with the natural elements, as they are interwoven and compliment each other, irregardless of any proposed boundary or designations. This would give credibility and legitimacy to the draft purpose and significance statements, as well as to the reputation of the National Park Service as stewards of America's most spectacular landscapes." SLBE-005

"We agree on the four elements contained in the significance statements – but feel that they don't highlight strongly enough the cultural history (Native American and early farmsteading) that should be preserved and shared through interpretive programs and displays." SLBE-0339

SUGGESTED COMPONENTS OF ALTERNATIVES

This topic received the most public input, with 408 comments received representing 40 percent of the total comments. The intent of the commenters who suggested specific actions is for the NPS to include these actions or projects as components of alternatives, or management zones, developed for analysis within the GMP/Wilderness Study planning effort.

The majority of suggestions for alternative components focused on development (24 percent) and accessibility to the park (11 percent). Suggestions were made regarding recreational activities and areas within the Lakeshore where activities could be increased or reduced. Comments were also received regarding the protection of natural and cultural resources and specific actions to be taken.

It should be noted that there were 73 comments received requesting that the NPS make no changes to the management of the Lakeshore and would like to see it continued to be managed as it currently is. Others would like it to be like it was 20 years or 200 years ago.

"I would like to see the Lakeshore essentially as it is now. The facilities that are available should be updated and improved as necessary." SLBE-067

Some people felt that the park should be unmanaged and that nature should take its course. Others wanted the park to be as undeveloped as possible.

"Let only 'nature' make any changes in this area!" SLBE-079

Other comments that suggest change in the management of the Lakeshore were broken down according to major topics similar to those referred to above in the issue-specific statement sections.

Access

Comments regarding access included whether or not to allow mountain bikes into areas of the park, where to have boat launches, and suggestions of roads that could be closed. A paved wheelchair-accessible trail was also suggested. Areas people desired continued access to included Platte Point, the Dune Climb area, Pierce Stocking Scenic Drive, Tiesma Beach, and Peterson Beach. Another wanted to close the Esch Road area. One commenter wanted the Pierce Stocking Scenic Drive to be open only to hikers and bicyclists. A comment was made to close all roads, with bicycle access to Otter Lake and Peterson Beach via bicycle.

With regard to boating, one commenter wanted no motorboats in the inland lakes. Others wanted to reduce traffic on Crystal River, but ensure it remained open to canoeing. One commenter suggested closing Crystal River to motorized boats.

Specific comments on access as a component of the alternatives included the following:

"We are quite willing to sacrifice motor vehicle accessibility of some areas in order to insure that the largest possible area of the Lakeshore remains undeveloped and as pristine as possible. That could include the closure of back roads like Esch Road." SLBE-007

"Access to the beaches remain important to me and my family...closing these points would limit park value for visitors." SLBE-063

"Please consider more beach facilities for seniors and people with strollers, walkers, and people on crutches." SLBE-294

Alternative suggestions regarding bicycles are described in more detail in the "Development" and "Visitor Use and Experience" subsections below.

Conservation and Preservation of Resources

There were many suggestions for the preservation and conservation of the park's natural and cultural resources. One commenter wanted early 1900s life preserved for future generations. A number of commenters mentioned specific types of buildings to restore, such as a sawmill, a gristmill, and a Native American settlement. Another commenter would like the South Manitou lighthouse and home preserved. Continued preservation of Glen Haven, Point Oneida area, and the South Manitou life saving station area were also suggested.

Others, however, expressed that there should be no further historic restoration, and that some of the buildings should be allowed to decay on South Manitou Island and the barn near the dunes. One commenter would like to see all old buildings removed.

In particular, people had many ideas for the maintenance and/or use of the farmsteads within the park. Some were opposed to allowing farming in the Lakeshore, while others would like to see restored farmsteads used as living farms.

Specific comments on historic resources as a component of the alternatives included the following:

"It is my hope that the Park through a good GMP will have set in motion maintenance strategies that endeavor to conserve the historic structures representative of the late 19th and early 20th century life, including farm buildings, structures supporting tourism of the era, schools, Coast Guard and Life Saving buildings, and commercial buildings. It is also critically important that along with historic structures, some of the farm landscapes that existed in the Park be maintained." SLBE-005

"Historic structures and farms should be a high priority with some farms actively farmed using primitive methods and heritage crops and animals." SLBE-003

"I would like to see a Port Oneida Rural 'Headquarters', a sort of visitor's center for the district, a place to start exploring 19th/20th century farm life. Also someway to demonstrate/interpret or depict what farming, schooling, rural life was like in the district." SLBE-242

Fewer comments were received regarding suggestions for management of natural resources within the Lakeshore. Different views were expressed about the long-term management of farm fields in the park. One commenter wanted the fields to remain as bird habitat. Another commenter suggested reverting pine plantations to natural forest. Wildlife corridors were also suggested.

Specific comments on natural resources as a component of the alternatives included the following:

"It would be nice to maintain some of the open fields for bird habitat." SLBE-153

"I'd like to see some wildlife management being done. Maybe the old farmsteads could be something between a living farm and an abandoned farm with some crops such as corn, alfalfa fields, maybe the apple trees cared for. Keep the fields from going back to hardwoods." SLBE-120

Development

Comments regarding development within the Lakeshore included roads, boat launches or ramps, parking areas, visitor centers, hiking or biking trails, and additional facilities. These comments ranged from general to specific suggestions regarding where and whether these developments should take place in the Lakeshore.

Comments were received regarding development of roads within the Lakeshore. Some commenters were opposed to developing roads through the Benzie Corridor. One suggested developing trails instead.

"The Benzie Corridor (Crystal Ridge) is mentioned under development. Since there is a settled lawsuit between the MDNR and the Platte Lake Improvement Association (PLIA) this corridor (road) needs another look to determine if a road is now even feasible under the conditions of that settlement. It may be necessary to abandon the idea of a road and instead, propose trails or the elimination of the corridor entirely (which, of course, would require Congressional action that could take place at the same time as this Wilderness issue might reach the Congress). In any case, it appears that this issue should be revisited. Elimination of this road/project might free up financial resources for currently underfunded needs that would allow for 'the most effective and efficient operation of the Lakeshore." SLBE-010

Comments were received regarding the addition of boat launches or harbors within the Lakeshore. Again, these comments ranged from general comments of support or opposition to those that made specific recommendations on locations within the Lakeshore for consideration. Glen Haven and the mouth of the Platte River were the two specific locations mentioned where people were either in support of a launch or harbor in those areas or opposed to the development. A marina and a pier were also suggested.

"What is needed is a boat launch at the mouth of the Platte River. The ramp should accommodate the small boats like those now trying to launch at the river. It has been a safety issue for years and needs to be addressed no matter how much the idea has been rejected by the park service." SLBE-033

"Don't construct a marina at Glen Haven or Platte River or anywhere else." SLBE-323

A number of comments were received requesting additional trails be developed in the park for hiking, biking, cross country skiing, and/or horseback riding. Paved trails were suggested for the bike paths. One individual suggested marking specific trails for cross country skiing only.

"We would like to see more walking trails especially on along the Miller Hill Ridge." SLBE-016

"We recognize and accept that wilderness designation precludes biking. But we would encourage the GMP to support and enhance bicycle use in other ways and in non-wilderness area. The proposed bike path along M-22 is a positive example." SLBE-007

Other comments included those that suggested other facilities be added within the Lakeshore for recreational activities, such as picnic tables, benches, and bathrooms, particularly in frequently used areas. Comments were also received regarding the increased need for parking areas to improve safety while others were opposed to the development of more parking areas. Some commenters desired more parking areas developed near highways, including near M-22 in the Trails End Road/Otter Lake areas.

"We could see improving and developing more parking and trailhead areas near the highways, as a way of spreading visitors out and encouraging use of some of the lesser used areas and beaches. For example, a parking area could be developed near M-22 in the Trails End Road/Otter Lake area to be used as a jumping off point for walks to the beach." SLBE-007

"No more roads, no more big parking lots to attract more crowds." SLBE-158

"Please place a toilet facility at Tucker Lake boat launch." SLBE-021

"I would like more public beach areas with parking and restrooms on Lake Michigan. More campsites are necessary. Developing more areas for public use with 'save' more natural areas." SLBE-057

The Sleeping Bear Inn, Glen Haven Inn, and the Cottage Inn, all presumably referring to the Sleeping Bear Inn, were all suggested to be opened and run by the National Park Service. Restorations of the inn were also described.

"You should reopen the old hotel at Glen Haven. My parents once ate dinner there when it was originally open. My mother would like to see it again one day." SLBE-113

Additional facilities suggested for development include a visitor center, a gondola ride, a seating area at Miller Hill, rustic cabins and campgrounds along Lake Michigan Road, boardwalks, a kiosk fee station at Lake Michigan Road, areas for educational facilities, and showers at the D.H. Campground.

As visitor numbers increase in the future, comments were received suggesting ways to decrease visitor congestion.

"As the number of visitors increase, more focal areas could be developed in order to funnel some of the masses away from the few existing sites." SLBE-061

Some commenters wanted less development to occur. One requested not modernizing the North Bar Parking Area and other access points, presumably referring to no additions of picnic tables or restrooms, while another did not want development of parking areas for canoe outfitter groups. Another commenter requested no large visitor center be developed in the southern portion of the park. Reducing blacktop and roads, especially along Lake Michigan Road, was also suggested.

"Limit overnight accommodations and parking facilities. No more panoramic [sic] oversights or recreational areas. No campgrounds." SLBE-076

Suggestions for land management included removing houses, restoring the sites on acquired properties, and using some buildings in Glen Haven as hotels.

Management of New Areas and Suggested Land Acquisition

Comments were received which requested no further land acquisition or that the NPS should acquire more land. Some specific sites suggested for acquisition included the Crib and Point Betsie lighthouses, South Fox Island, The Homestead, Little Platte Lake, Long Lake, coastline on west side of Pyramid Point, Squaw Island, overlook of Glen Lake on Miller Hill Ridge, and areas in the Benzie Corridor. One commenter stated that the southern entrance to the park needed to be protected from additional fragmentation and should be acquired.

"Hopefully the park can acquire additional lands to serve as buffer areas – particularly wetlands and dunes not currently protected. Consider acquisition of the Fox Islands." SLBE-022

Some commenters did not want any more land acquired or did not want the Benzie Corridor area to be further acquired.

"I wish you would stop adding on to the overall size of federal property." SLBE-069

Operations and Management

Changes to law enforcement, overall park management, energy sources, maintenance, and other management were suggested by commenters. Law enforcement received the majority of comments, with a number of commenters expressing the need for more rangers, more enforcement of regulations, noise control and overnight ranger staffing in the campgrounds, and additional methods of enforcement, such as solar-powered cameras and posting numbers to call to report infractions of rules.

It was also suggested that the park switch to renewable energy sources and replace the South Manitou diesel generator with a renewable energy source. Making recycling available was also mentioned.

General management issues included removing mobile homes and structures on park lands and the need for maintaining park housing and buildings.

Example comments for operation and management alternative suggestions include:

"I would like to see increased funding for more ranger patrols to help prevent illicit activities (e.g., fires, camping, vandalism, inappropriate off road vehicle use) and promote education and understanding of the ecological value of this area. This targets the clash between wilderness designation and recreational use. I am also concerned about increased development up to the park edges – I would like to see the park expanded with land acquisition where possible." SLBE-235

"Convert 'park' vehicles to non fossil fuel (remember NPS is protecting fossils) use alternative electricity – wind, solar, heat pump..." SLBE-070

Visitor Use and Experience

A number of comments were made regarding the use of bicycles in the park. Specific bike trails were suggested, such as a route from Glen Arbor to Glen Haven and to the narrows, circling Glen Lake, the existing Alligator Hill trails, and Pierce Stocking Scenic Drive, at certain times. Other commenters felt bikes should not be allowed on trails in the park.

"[Our group] recommends that the present Alligator Hill trail system form the "backbone" of an expanded stacked-loop system, where new singletrack (narrow) trail is created access the unutilized control points -- particularly scenic vistas of the Straits and if possible, Glen Lake. Such a trail could be made suitable foot, bicycle, and snowshoe users. The greater corridor width required by skiers and equestrians may be feasible on some added loops, while not on others. In principle, as many diverse user groups as possible should be permitted, within the limits of sustainability."

Some suggestions were made to address use issues in the park. These included placing limits on canoe, kayak, and tube activity; restrictions on the number of visitors, set a carrying capacity along the river from M-22 to the mouth, and create a daily permit system.

"If in order to prevent degradation, it becomes necessary in the future to impose additional restrictions on various types of use, it would be understandable and acceptable to us. Examples could include reasonable limits on canoe, kayak, and tube activity on the lower Platte or Crystal Rivers, and limiting the number of campers on the Manitou's especially South Manitou." SLBE-007

"At times there is extreme congestion from M-22 to the river mouth. When the NPS campground is full, people go elsewhere. I feel a carrying capacity for this day use area from M-22 to the river mouth should be studied. Looking at a kiosk entrance station on Lake Michigan Road would be an idea." SLBE-008

Dune car rides were suggested to be added, while jet skis and snowmobiles were suggested to remain off limits within the Lakeshore. Boat tours from Glen Haven to see the dunes were requested.

Some commenters suggested limiting certain recreational activities. Suggestions were made to close some trails to hunting and eliminate overnight camping.

Public transportation and central parking systems were mentioned by more than one commenter.

"Get and use public transportation – central parking and distribution." SLBE-070

Wilderness

Suggestions for extent and location of wilderness have been included in the "Comments Regarding the Wilderness within the Lakeshore" section below.

Education and Interpretation

A need for interpreters and more educational programs for children was commented upon. Increasing the level of education for protecting resources was mentioned by more than one commenter. Suggested locations included the dune climb, Empire Bluff, and Glen Haven. A Michigan State University Horticulture Farm was suggested at Frank Farm.

"Educate the public to treat areas with respect; i.e. 'If they carry something in, have them carry it out.' Educate! Educate! Educate!" SLBE-119

An auto tour route was suggested, as well as selecting protected areas where visitors can go to observe and learn from provided interpretive materials. An expanded marine history display was requested. Guidebooks instead of posted educational signs on natural trails were suggested, as well as providing information about important land holdings at interpretive sites.

"I would like to see the historic farmsteads (Port Oneida and other farms too) be more available to park visitors in a way that allows them to learn more about the history of the area. At the very least, there should be an Auto Tour route with signs at various farms describing aspects of the history." SLBE-101

COMMENTS REGARDING THE WILDERNESS WITHIN THE LAKESHORE

Comments about wilderness (282) fell into a few categories: general support and opposition to wilderness in the Lakeshore, defining wilderness, access, conservation, and suggestions for wilderness in the park. Those who supported wilderness in the park thought it should be as proposed in the 1981 Wilderness Study; only on the Manitou Islands or one or other of the islands such as not South Manitou Island, not the mainland; at Sleeping Bear Plateau and Aral Dunes; or that wilderness should be further expanded from the 1981 Wilderness Study recommendations. One group thought that the 1981 recommendation did not provide enough detail to indicate how the boundaries on South Manitou Island were determined. Some of those opposed to wilderness in the Lakeshore thought no place should be designated as wilderness because there was no wilderness in the park. Other commenters questioned the park's interpretation of wilderness or they expressed concerned about access and how it would affect visitor use and appreciation of the park.

"First and foremost I am for the wilderness concept to be established in the majority of the park, I feel this would give the park the protection it needs." SLBE-173

"Preserve the dunes and Lakeshore as much as possible, but not make it so much wilderness, that older people that can't hike have some areas to enjoy." SLBE-084

"It has always been my belief that the NPS should plan and develop our natural resources and parks so that people could utilize them with a minimal impact on nature and the land. Lately, it seems as though the NPS has taken this to mean put up a few roadside pavilions and exclude people from animals and the natural beauty of the land. I do not see how the term 'wilderness' can be applied to SBDNL. It has always been a public park with farms, towns, and roads that allowed access to the beauty of the Lake Michigan and the natural formations in the area." SLBE-118

"[The] NPS has incorrectly interpreted the 1982 Act. A Wilderness Study that follows the statements in the newsletter should arrive at the conclusion that most of the Lakeshore does not meet those qualifications." SLBE-083

Some commenters favored a balance between wilderness and access.

"Make sure that recreational areas and wilderness areas are balanced." SLBE-076

"The most important management challenge is balancing preservation with access." SLBE-143

"I think more property should be designated as Wilderness area to maintain its quality. It will take careful consideration and balance to determine just how much wilderness is right – as compared to recreational use of the Lakeshore." SLBE-067

OTHER COMMENTS REGARDING THE PLANNING PROCESS AND LAKESHORE MANAGEMENT

During this portion of the scoping process, 138 comments were received that had concerns or comments regarding the planning process for the GMP/Wilderness Study, management of the Lakeshore in general with regard to partnerships and education, and other resource concerns.

Comments or Suggestions on the GMP/Wilderness Study Process

During the comment period, people expressed concern over the planning process in terms of the length of time to complete the process or how the plan is being developed. One expressed concern over including the Wilderness Study as part of the GMP process. Some people expressed concern over the length of time to complete the management plan and for the NPS to implement an action. Some commenters requested that members of the local community or specific organizations be added to the planning team. One group wrote requesting that the NPS implement a preferred alternative with regard to wilderness that is supported by public consensus.

"I am concerned that by incorporating the WS [Wilderness Study] into the GMP, rather than conducting the WS and then developing a GMP (as initially recommended by NPS), the WS will receive less attention and/or thoroughness, and be assigned a lesser degree of importance within the overall framework of the GMP." SLBE-237 "If the public, specifically special interest groups, does not feel that their concerns/fears are being heard, they will not align with the planning team's guidance, regardless of the amount and soundness of planning." SLBE-335

A number of comments were received regarding the public participation process. Many respondents were encouraged because the NPS during this GMP/Wilderness Study process is making strides to involve the public and to provide a diverse means of communicating what is occurring such as through the newsletter, the public meetings that were held, and the availability of information on the park's website.

"Thank you for backing down from the plan of a few years ago and restarting with ample opportunities for public input. It may take longer, but in the long run the outcome will be better for everyone." SLBE-339

"We appreciate your efforts to keep the public informed about park plans for the future. The public input will help us all feel a sense of responsibility for the park's future." SLBE-252

There were those however that were displeased that the NPS chose to hold meetings in the winter when many of the residents in adjacent communities were not in residence.

"I do not see any private or local public participation on your planning team. How do you expect to get their ideas if they do not participate in your planning meetings? Many organizations stated that they were highly willing to participate. The local sporting clubs, tribes, businesses, governments, etc. all wanted to be in on your next planning meetings and they are being excluded. You should have at a minimum a 20-25% outside participation on your 'team'." SLBE-118

"I would suggest the park service recruit area residents to form a committee to work side by side with the Department of the Interior in determining the future of the park." SLBE-033

Comments or Suggestions Regarding Partnerships

A number of respondents to the newsletter suggested that the NPS consider increasing partnerships and collaboration with other groups for assistance with management of the Lakeshore. A few commenters had suggested that the NPS consider volunteer groups to manage the projects within the Lakeshore.

"The Park's embrace of volunteer organizations to assist in the completion of Park projects help to address maintenance challenges and build links between the Park and the community it serves." SLBE-005

"The Michigan Mountain Biking Association (MMBA) is interested in partnering with the National Park Service to develop opportunities for backroad and off-road cycling in the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore." SLBE-165

"Develop greater ecological understanding by organizing more public involvement in ongoing preservation projects (orchards, blueberries, barns, meadows, plant-frog-bird counts etc.)" SLBE-193

Comments to be Addressed that are Out of Scope or More Appropriate for Another Planning Effort

A number of comments (77) were received expressing public concern about resources or the management of the Lakeshore that were categorized as either being out of scope of the GMP/Wilderness Study process or that they would be better addressed under a specific resource plan. The comments will be taken into account by the NPS at the Lakeshore for future consideration; however, these comments will not be addressed by the GMP/Wilderness Study. Topics of these comments include tribal hunting regulations, fees, cougar signs, pets, hunting, implementation plans (including deer management), invasive species, and development outside of the park.

Some commenters made suggestions to change things not entirely within the NPS' control. For example, improvements to the existing boat launch were described, such as adding a lightpost. Moving the current boat launch, which is not on NPS lands, was mentioned a number of times. The barn by the dunes, which is part of the private Day Farm, was suggested to be converted to a visitor center. Converting Day Farm into a living farm was requested; however, the NPS does not own this farm. Another commenter suggested encouraging bike rentals in Empire to support uses other than motorized vehicles.

DETAILED ACCOUNT OF COMMENTS RECEIVED

Tables 1 through 5 below provide an account of the source of comments, the areas from which comments were received, and summarize the content of all documents received during the public comment period. Figure 1 shows the types of issues the comments were about. Figure 2 shows which types of issues received how many comments for suggesting alternative components.

TABLE 1: TYPE OF COMMENTS

Туре	Number of Documents	Percent of Total Document
Electronic mail sent	15	4
Comments sent to NPS planning website	24	7
U.S. mail	282	84
Public meeting comments	16	5
Total	337	100

TABLE 2: SOURCE OF COMMENTS

Source	Number of Documents	Percent of Total Document
Business	5	1
Individual	324	96
Organization	8	2
Public agency	0	0
Tribes	0	0
Total	337	100

TABLE 3: STATE OF ORIGIN

State	Number of Documents	Percent of Total Documents
MI	267	80
AL	3	1
AZ	1	1
CA	2	1
FL	3	1
GA	1	1
IA	1	1
IL	7	2
IN	7	2
MD	2	1
NC	1	1
ОН	8	2
OR	1	1
PA	1	1
SC	1	1
UT	1	1
VA	1	1
WA	1	1
Unknown	34	10
Total	337	100

TABLE 4. NUMBER OF COMMENTS BY LOCAL COUNTIES AND OTHERS IN MICHIGAN

County	Number of Comments	
Benzie	50	
Grand Traverse	12	
Leelanau	100	
Other	105	
Total	267	

TABLE 5. ASPECTS OF SLEEPING BEAR DUNES NATIONAL LAKESHORE VALUED BY COMMENTERS

Value	Number of Comments
Beauty	39
Recreational opportunities such as hunting, fishing, biking, etc.	31
Beaches and dunes	28
Undeveloped	22
Solitude and serenity	20
Trails	20
Accessibility	16
Native wildlife and plants	11
Wilderness	10
Natural environment and natural settings	9
Views	8
Values historic farmsteads and cemeteries	7
Landscapes of North and South Manitou islands	7
Preservation and interpretation of	7

Number of Comments
6
6
5
5
4
4
3
3
3
2
2
2
2
2
2
1
1
1
1
1
1
1

Value	Number of Comments
Non-motorized entry points	1
Platte River	1
Not too crowded	1
Glen Haven area	1
Pt. Betsie Beach	1
No motorized vehicles on sand dunes/shoreline	1
Protecting nature above recreational activities	1
Open space	1
Spectrum of experiences (high use areas, remote areas)	1
Total number of comments	302*

^{*}This number does not equal the number of commenters because some commenters did not specify what they value about the park, and others mentioned several things that they value.

TABLE 6: NUMBER OF COMMENTS RECEIVED FOR EACH TOPIC AND ISSUE

Topics	Issue	Number of Comments
Issue-Specific Statements F	Regarding Management of the Lakesl	nore
	Access	53
	Conservation and preservation	25
	Development	13
	Management areas and future land acquisition	7
	Operations and management	24
	Visitor use and experience	19
Comments Regarding Wilderness within the Lakeshore		
	Wilderness	282
Suggested Components of t	he Alternatives	
	Access	46
	Conservation and preservation	42
	Development	99
	Management areas and future land acquisition	26
	Operations and management	27
	Visitor use and experience	44
	Other including partnerships and planning issues	5
	Education and interpretation	21
	Other including energy, general development, and general management	83
Comments on Draft Purpos	se and Significance Statements	
	Purpose and Significance	73

Topics	Issue	Number of Comments
	Purpose	31
	Significance	14
Other Comments Regarding	g the Planning Process and Lakeshor	re Management
	Comments or suggestions on the GMP/Wilderness Study process, partnerships, and education	61
	Comments that are out of scope or more appropriate for another planning process	77
Total comments		1072

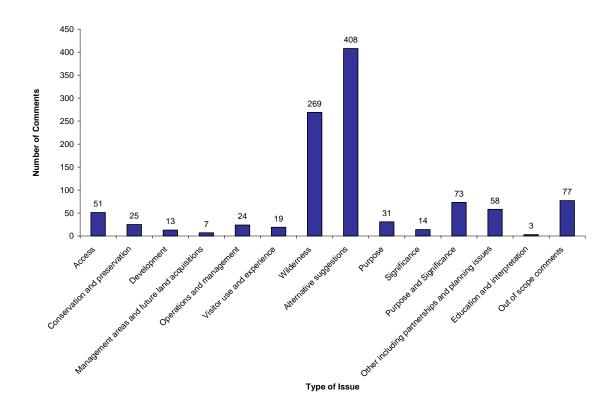


FIGURE 1. ISSUES AND CONCERNS FROM PUBLIC COMMENTS BY TOPIC

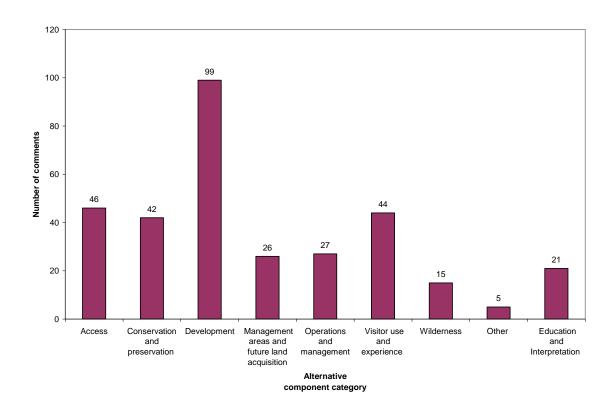


FIGURE 2. TYPES OF ALTERNATIVE COMPONENTS SUGGESTED BY ISSUE

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APPENDIX A: NEWSLETTER #1 COMMENT FORM

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National Park Service U.S. Department of the Interior



Your thoughts, ideas, and concerns are important to us. Your comments are welcome at any time, however, they would be particularly helpful if we received them by **March 17, 2006.**

particularly helpful if we received them by March 17, 2006.
What do you particularly value about Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore?
What concerns do you have about Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore that you believe the General Management Plan/Wilderness Study should address? (Please be specific as possible and tell us why you think this is important.)
What do you want Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore to be like in the future? Imagine yourself visiting the park 20 years from now. Describe what you would like to see and experience at that time.
Read over the draft purpose and significance statements for the park. Do you agree with them? How might you improve them?
What other thoughts or ideas would you like to share with the planning team?